

Community Engagement Framework

Adopted July 2000

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1. Introduction

The Community Engagement Framework outlines Council's commitment to actively engaging the Community in the decision making activities of Council and in decisions that directly impact upon the community; on how they live, recreate, work, study, use services and do business. It describes how Council will ensure the active engagement of its community in information gathering and provision, and in community consultation and participation .

The Community Engagement Framework ["Framework"] supports and complements the role of Councillors in decision-making. The Framework links Council's commitment to community consultation and participation with its statutory responsibilities to make decisions which promote good governance.

Council believes that good governance underpins the Australian democratic system of which local government forms the first level.

Council is committed to the Victorian Local Government Association's and the Municipal Association of Victoria's Code of Good Governance which states that

"local governments must seek community understanding and involvement in governance through effective communication with their communities. They must disseminate information, seek input, stimulate debate and be an effective advocate for their communities. They have a responsibility to develop a range of communication and participation methods."

Community engagement, consultation and participation is central to Council's commitment to community sustainability. Council's Corporate Plan 1999 -2000 defines Sustainability as referring to " forms of development and activity which improve the quality of life and enhance the quality of our natural and social environment. "

Community engagement develops local community based decision making, citizenship and social responsibility. Community engagement is concerned with the empowerment of the local community by facilitating citizens' direct input into decisions which affect their lives. It provides the means for citizens to participate in public life beyond the election of representatives.



2. Links With The Corporate Plan

Council's commitment to Community Engagement is demonstrated in the commitments and key statements made by Council in the Corporate Plan 2000-2001.

It states:

"Good Governance is about leading our community. To do this effectively Council must ensure that our residents and ratepayers are well informed about Council's processes and structures. It means that Council must be open and accountable to the community, and provide ample opportunity for community feedback and criticism, where necessary."

The Corporate Plan states Council's committed to a number of principles. These are:

- Transparency – Council's processes and decisions will be open to public scrutiny
- Sustainability – Council's actions to meet present needs will have a positive impact on the capacity of our community to meet future needs
- Engagement – Council will give our community good information and provide ways for the community to tell us what it thinks on issues that affect us
- Accountability – Council will give the community information needed to assess our performance, and ensure that community concerns are addressed quickly and seriously
- Leadership – Council will lead discussion and debate, and will make its decisions in the best interests of our community
- Accessibility – Council's services and resources will be available to our community on an equitable basis
- Integration– Council's services and activities will be planned, developed and implemented with a minimum of bureaucracy and maximum co-ordination
- Partnering – Council will form partnerships with other groups or organisations where it will assist our community to do so

In Council's Annual Plan 1999-2000 the two key strategies under Good Governance include:-

- We will provide quality, timely information and elicit views and concerns of the community and stakeholders to enable informed and sound decision-making.
- We will continue to develop and refine policy frameworks to enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community.



2.1 Statutory Obligations in Consulting with the community

A number of Government legislative frameworks require Councils to consult with the community prior to adopting a policy or making a decision. Some of these are:

2.1.1 Planning Applications and Amendments to the Planning Scheme.

Council has a number of obligations to advertise or 'give notice' of planning permit applications and amendments to the Maribyrnong Planning Scheme. These obligations are set out under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

The purpose of giving notice of planning permit applications and proposed amendments is to let the community know about changes that may affect them; and to give those affected the opportunity to voice their concerns or support for the proposed changes.

2.1.2 Links with Best Value

Legislation has been introduced to guide local government in the development of 'Best Value'. Best Value seeks a strategic and integrated approach to planning and service delivery for sustainable community benefit.

Best Value focuses on outcomes for communities and its citizens. Community consultation will have a strong role in identifying community needs and outcomes.

2.1.3 Local Laws

The Local Government Act sets out rules which Council must follow in making a Local Law.

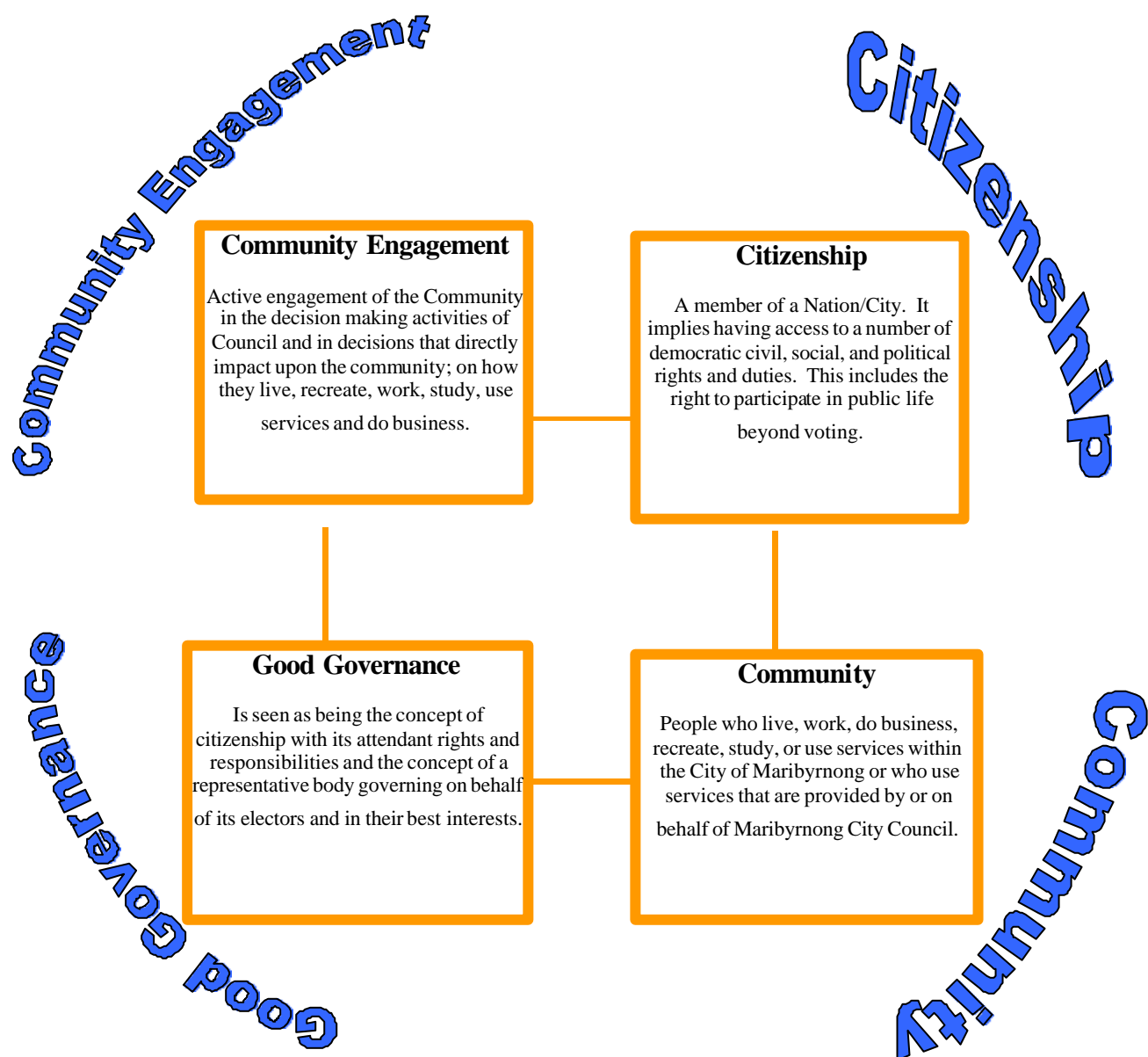
Before Making the Local Law, Council must advertise by public notice (as well as Government Gazette) :

- the purpose of the local law
- that copies of the proposed law are available to the public
- any person affected by the proposed law may make a submission to Council



2.2 Understanding Community Engagement

The following provides a summary of the four key terms used throughout the Framework.



Community engagement is seen as being made up of four key elements:- information gathering, information provision, consultation, and participation.

Community Engagement

Information gathering

It is an ongoing process which if tapped properly can provide effective feedback and information upon which Council and the Community can make informed decisions.

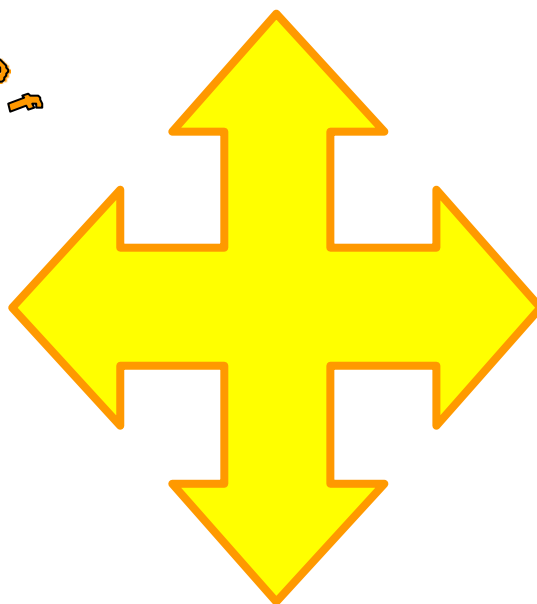
Provision of information

The provision of information is the primary form of community engagement.

For a number of citizens, depending on the nature of the issue the provision of information is often the only form of community engagement they wish to participate in.

Participation

A collaborative process in which the stakeholders/ community work in collaboration with Council to define the problem, identify the priorities and develop solutions/ implementation plans and strategies.



consultation

The provision of information with the objective of receiving feedback and comments from recipients i.e. the community, service users etc.. in order to inform the decision making process.



3. The Principles of Community Engagement

The following are a set of principles which guide the Community Engagement Framework.

- Council views all members of its community as being citizens. As such it recognises the relationship between Council and the Community as being one which involves political, civil and social rights and duties. It recognises that citizenship grows and develops with the participation of citizens in democratic processes.
- Council believes that community well being, vibrancy, and sustainability is enhanced by citizens participating in Council's decision making processes.
- Council will work in partnership with the Community to shape the future of the City and believes that the City's future is best achieved through an active and informed citizenry.
- Council will be accountable to its Community through community consultation and participation for the management of its resources, assets, and expenditure and for the decisions it makes.
- Council believes that all citizens have the right to be consulted and to participate in Council's consultative and decision-making processes.
- Council will encourage and assist citizens to participate in consultative and decision making processes.
- Council recognises that there are a number of groups within the community who have particular requirements to enable them to participate effectively in consultative and decision-making processes. These groups include:- the aged, youth, parents/one parent family/carers with child care needs, people with disabilities; people from different religious and cultural backgrounds as well as people with language barriers .
- Council will ensure that any barriers to effective participation are addressed.
- Council will encourage participation from residents and ratepayers regardless of their religion, cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.
- Council values and respects the diversity of the community of Maribyrnong. As such Council will ensure that community consultation processes are utilised which take into account the Community's diversity.
- Council believes that the Community has the right to be informed about Council's services, activities, governance and decision making mechanisms. It believes that informing the Community about Council's services, activities and decision making mechanisms should be ongoing and should be accessible to all members of the Community.



3.1 Benefits of ‘Engaging’ the community

There are a number of benefits¹ in engaging the community. Some of the benefits can be summarised as follows:-

- Helps Council plan services better to give users what they want and expect;
- Helps Council prioritise services and make better use of resources;
- Alerts Council to problems quickly so that we have a chance to put things right;
- Symbolizes Council’s commitment to open, accountable and committed to services;
- Allows broader range of views to be expressed and more information to be assembled prior to making decisions;
- Enables Council and the community to work together to achieve speedy and balanced decisions;
- Offers opportunities for ordinary people to contribute to and influence outcomes which directly affect their lives;
- Enhances the accountability of government by creating a direct link between governments and their citizens; and
- Reduces the alienation which is brought about when members of the community feel they are unable to contribute to decision making.

¹ Extracted from the ‘Community Consultation and Participation for Best Practice’ Centre for Leadership and Management, 2000, page 27.



SECTION II

How Community Engagement will be Undertaken in the City of Maribyrnong



4. How Community Engagement will be Undertaken in the City of Maribyrnong

Community engagement is made up of four key activities. These are

1. information gathering,
2. information provision,
3. consultation, and
4. participation.

In addition to these four key activities another activity has been separated out for special consideration. This is the activity of governance, where governance applies strictly to the Community's access to Councillors and engagement in the formal governance decision making processes of Council.

A summary of how Council will undertake these activities is outlined in the following section.



4.1 Information Gathering

Council recognises that the Community is a rich source of information and that such information is often provided on an informal basis and is ongoing in nature.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>Council will establish mechanisms for gathering information from the Community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Branch of Council will be responsible for establishing mechanisms for capturing ongoing community information and feedback. Strategies will include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the establishment of formal community feedback mechanisms; ○ formalising community and customer feedback provided to staff who have direct contact with the Community and formalising this process; ○ extend this process beyond the particular service area to other areas of Council. For example the garbage collector, a home carer, etc. • The establishment of community and customer surveys that seek feedback on Council activities, Community issues and Council services. • Holding meetings with customers, and the Community to gain feedback on a service or on particular community issues. • Collating and analysing information gathered from the Community to identify trends, recurring issues, and community issues and priorities.



4.2 Information Provision

This is the primary form of community engagement. In order to be able to actively engage in the Community and in Council’s decision making processes, the community requires information. This includes information on services, on community and Council issues and activities, and on Council’s governance and decision making mechanisms. For a number of people, depending on the nature of the issue, this may be the only form of community engagement they wish to partake in.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>Council will ensure that the Community is informed in relation to Council services, activities and on community issues of concern.</i></p> <p><i>Council will also ensure that the Community is informed about Council governance and decision making processes and on how the Community can become involved in such processes.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop information on the services Council provides; including on how citizens can access the service, citizens' rights and on how citizens may feedback any issues, concerns and suggestions for service improvements. • Ensure that all information provided to the Community is in a form that is accessible to all groups in the Community eg. diverse cultural and linguistic communities, people with disabilities, people with literacy difficulties, young people, the aged etc. • Information provision through Council newsletter and the local newspaper, resident information kits; information sessions, InfoWest, the creation of an Internet information site etc..²

² see **Section III, page 26** - “A summary of Community Consultation Processes, Strengths and Weaknesses” and **Section IV, page 32** - “Checklist for Consulting with Groups Within the Community who Have Particular Consultation Requirements and Needs”.



4.3 Consultation

Consultation is the provision of information with the objective of receiving feedback and comments from recipients i.e. the community, service users etc. in order to inform the decision making process.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>When Should Community Consultation be Undertaken</p> <p><i>Council will ensure that the Community is consulted on issues which impact on and or are of concern to the Community or to any group within the Community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will ensure that Community consultation takes place around:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of new Council policies, strategies and service plans; • the review and evaluation of existing Council policies, strategies and service plans; • the planning and development of new services and infrastructure; • the ongoing provision, management and review of Council services, and infrastructure; • the setting of priorities for Council in relation to social and strategic planning; services; and infrastructure and; • on issues which impact on and or are of concern to the Community or to any group within the Community; including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad community issues such as community safety, drugs, gambling; • specific issues that impact on a particular group e.g. older people, traders; • matters that affect people in a particular street, neighbourhood, suburb or shopping centre e.g.- traffic management, introduction of a new by law, a planning permit, or change in site or land usage; • matters that affect a particular site such as change in land use.
<p>Who Will be Consulted</p> <p><i>Consultation mechanisms will be chosen that while taking into account the primary groups impacted , will ensure an equitable spread in the range of groups being consulted.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All groups/persons who are impacted will be consulted. Stakeholders will vary according to the issue, but could include;- residents, ratepayers, businesses, those who visit or work in the municipality, other service providers/agencies, community groups, other levels of government, peak bodies etc. It could also include particular groups within the Community e.g. older people, families, children, youth, different ethnic groups, traders, people with disabilities etc. • Stakeholders will include primary groups, those who are directly impacted and secondary groups, those who are indirectly impacted.



Community Consultation (continued)

<p>Objectives Access</p> <p><i>Each consultation plan will outline strategies for consulting with groups identified as having particular consultation requirements.</i></p>	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will ensure that appropriate mechanisms are used to enable the following groups to participate;- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culturally and linguistically diverse communities • people with disabilities and their carers • youth • older people • families, single parent families & carers with children • people with limited incomes • people without access to transport
<p>Informing the Community</p> <p><i>The purpose of each consultation process will be conveyed clearly and honestly to the Community from the beginning. This will include what the consultation is to achieve, the anticipated outcomes and the role of Council and the Community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information regarding the community consultation process will be readily accessible to the Community and to all stakeholders. Such information will take into account language and disability needs and be provided through information mechanisms and channels that are accessible to all groups in the Community.
<p>Timing</p> <p><i>The consultation process will be initiated as early as possible.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation process will be initiated as early as possible and sufficient time will be allowed to enable adequate community involvement and comment to occur to influence the decision making process.



Community Consultation (continued)

<p>Objectives Consultation Techniques</p> <p><i>Council recognises that there is no single community and that different techniques need to be used to reach different groups and individuals.</i></p>	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council recognises that community consultation techniques will vary in accordance with who is being consulted and the nature and complexity of the issue that Council is consulting about. • Available resources will also determine the type of consultation techniques that can be utilised i.e. the timeframe available for consultation; the funds available; the staffing resource capacity etc. • A range of consultation techniques, if possible, will be utilised to ensure greater participation levels.³
<p>Consultation Project Plan</p> <p><i>Each consultation project will develop project plan prior to the commencement of the consultation.</i></p> <p>Resources</p> <p><i>Resources required for each consultation process will be identified in advance.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop project plan for each community engagement process, prior to the commencement of the consultation. Each plan to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the objectives of the consultation; ○ the people / groups to be consulted; ○ the consultation techniques to be used; ○ a strategy for involving groups that have particular consultation requirements; ○ the steps to be taken; ○ resources; timelines and a process for evaluation. • Resources and costs that need to be considered include transport, child care, the provision of respite care, disability aides; interpreters, translations, costs of meeting locations, refreshments, printing, the processing of consultation results, consultants, facilitators and staff time. • Council will provide, through Corporate training and a staff induction program, training for staff in community consultation.

³ Section IV, page 32, outlines a range of possible consultation techniques and their strengths and weaknesses etc.



Community Consultation (continued)

<p>Objectives Feedback</p> <p><i>Council will provide feedback to the Community and to those consulted on the outcomes of each consultation process.</i></p>	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This feedback will include feedback about what input was received, an analysis of this input and feedback on how the final decision was reached. • Formally report to Council and the Community on the results of the community consultation process. Eg. in Council Reports, an article in Council’s newsletter, etc.
<p>Evaluation</p> <p><i>Council will upon the completion of all community consultations undertake an evaluation process.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation should be planned from the beginning and should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who was consulted; ○ Method(s) used; ○ Adequacy of time scale; ○ Information provided; ○ Costs. • Upon the completion of all community consultations undertake an evaluation process. • Staff who have undertaken major consultation processes to present for discussion to a cross Council forum an analysis of the effectiveness of the consultation process. • Hold 2 or 3 times a year a special forum for officers to bring for discussion the results of effective community consultation processes.



4.4 Community Participation

Community participation enables the Community to provide ongoing and in depth input into community planning and into the development of solutions that are best able to meet the Community's needs. It also enables the Community and service users to have substantial input into the development and management of services. Participatory structures have the potential to empower communities and to enable residents to gain skills in community participation and decision making. In turn they provide for ongoing dialogue with Council and the potential for higher quality and specialist input into Council's planning and decision making processes.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>Council recognises and supports the value of community participation which is the most involving and participatory form of community consultation and community engagement.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will develop processes and structures to enable Community participation to occur. • Consultation processes will include mechanisms that enable members of the Community to actively participate in developing policies, plans, services and infrastructure. • Processes will include the establishment of specific working groups and forums around particular issues; the use of existing community committees/forums. • Participation can include the establishment of community committees of management and advisory structures in which representatives of the Community undertake decision making and /or the management of services on behalf of Council. Such structures usually have terms of reference from the Council which defines the decision making powers of the community management/ advisory structure.



4.5 Governance

Governance is seen as being the concept of citizenship with its attendant rights and responsibilities and the concept of a representative body governing on behalf of its electors and in their best interests.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>The governance system put in place will be responsive to the diversity of the Community. Council will be responsive to the information and participation requirements of the particular groups within the Community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will establish new mechanisms and reinforce existing opportunities which make the governance and decision making process of Council accessible to the community, e.g. improve access to Council meetings through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Holding Council meetings in community venues; ○ Continuing to encourage public participation in meetings through the inclusion of “Public Question Time” in Ordinary Council Meetings and Committee meetings. • Council will encourage the establishment of community networks to enable the community to engage in in-depth discussions on topical issues, e.g. increase communication opportunities between the community and individual Councillors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas by holding ward meetings which are less formal and best suit individual wards and Councillors; ○ Continue to promote Councillor participation in community group and community activities. • Council will provide information to the community regarding the governance and decision making processes of Council and how the community can become involved through:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advertising Council meetings; ○ Providing information about governance procedures and decision making processes through a range of mediums and in major community languages. - Council will inform the community on the outcomes of Council decisions and about issues being considered by Council.



5. Communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse communities

This section is intended to provide a framework for communicating with Council's culturally and linguistically diverse (“CALD”) residents and ratepayers.

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>Provide efficient and appropriate public contact services to all residents and ratepayers regardless of their culture and linguistic background.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist residents and ratepayers who have language difficulties by arranging for and accessing one or more of the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commonwealth Interpreting & Translating Service (TIS); ○ Victorian Interpreting & Translation Services (VITS); ○ On-site professional interpreters; ○ Bi-lingual staff. • Actively encourage the use of an interpreter whenever staff judge that communication with a resident / ratepayer would be improved. • Strongly discourage the use of unaccredited persons to interpret or translate, especially children, except in cases of extreme emergency. • Make available at all counter areas relevant translated information pertaining to its function and responsibility.



Communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (continued)

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>Promote the use of Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) & Victorian Interpreting and Translation Services (VITS).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an effective monitoring system for the use of VITS line of Credit. • Monitor the use of the dual handsets presently installed at the Customer Service meeting rooms. • Place a poster and a sign at all counter areas which states a person can request an interpreter through TIS or VITS. • Provide staff with guidelines and training on the effective use of professional interpreters (both on site and through the use of TIS & VITS). • Publicise the interpreting & translation service throughout Council.
<p><i>Provide information in appropriate methods which publicises and promotes Council Services.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and monitor the information needs of residents of CALD with a view to improving their access to Council services and decision making processes. • Provide translation in relevant community languages on the reverse side of all appropriate Council letterhead stating that if the correspondence is not understood in English, assistance is available through an interpreter, on request. • Use a range of appropriate methods to publicise Council's services to people of CALD. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilising the ethnic media; ○ Utilising existing community networks; ○ Targeting specific language groups through educational talks, information sessions, etc. • Translating appropriate sections of the Annual Report, Corporate Plan, Notice to Ratepayers, Newsletters etc. • Identify, develop and contribute to linkages with CALD information sources including media and other public relations agencies.



Communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (continued)

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>Recognise diversity, both linguistic and cultural, within Council's function areas.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop demographic information on the community through accurate population profiles of culturally and linguistic communities according to local neighbourhoods and/or suburbs. • Develop a better understanding of the languages spoken by services users through regular analysis of customer data bases. • All Council policies to reflect the City's diversity, both linguistic and cultural. • Ensure Council's role in managing urban development reflects the needs and aspirations of the broad cross section of the community, including those from CALD. • Ensure inclusive processes of decision-making about neighbourhoods, the built environment and new developments. • Develop Communicating Emergency Management information to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
<p><i>Support Council's bilingual staff pool, promote greater cultural understanding and undertake appropriate staff development programs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to update bilingual staff register and assist bilingual staff in defining their role within the organisation with a clear differentiation between the role of an interpreter and bilingual worker. • Recognise the diversity of the community through employment practices by providing cultural awareness and cross-cultural training for all levels of Council Officers. • Undertake a survey of all Council Staff to assess their cultural and linguistic diversity for comparisons with the diversity of residents.



Communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (continued)

Objectives	Strategies
<p><i>Explore funding opportunities for the provision of interpreting and translation services both, internally and externally.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate on behalf of the residents and ratepayers for increased funds through TIS, Office of Local Government and the Department of Human Services. • Develop priority projects across all Branches requiring access to interpreting and translation services and provide appropriate budget item to meet the cost of these projects.
<p><i>Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures aimed at better communicating with residents and the ratepayers of CALD, and where necessary, to develop ways of improving their effectiveness.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Branch to develop a few key action plans aimed at increasing CALD residents and ratepayers understanding of the availability of Council’s services and the decision making processes. • Each Branch to develop effective systems in collecting CALD data on their service users.



6. Co-ordination and Review of the Framework

In order for the Community Engagement Framework to be an effective policy tool for Council staff and Councillors, a process will be established to ensure ongoing co-ordination and review of the Framework.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Coordination of Community Engagement Processes Across Council</p> <p><i>Council will locate the responsibility for overseeing Council's community consultation process in one Branch.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will locate the responsibility for overseeing Council's community consultation process in one Department to ensure:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ongoing improvement and consistency in community consultation processes; • maintaining resources on community consultation; • overseeing the implementation and enhancement of Council's Community Engagement Framework. - Council officers, prior to undertaking community consultation, will inform the Branch responsible for community consultation of the purpose, the timing and proposed process for undertaking the community consultation.
<p>Review of the Community Engagement Framework</p> <p><i>Council will review the Community Engagement Framework on an annual basis.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On an annual basis Council will review the Community Engagement Framework. This process will include an evaluation of its effectiveness. It will also include the development of particular strategies to ensure the intent of the Community Engagement Framework is put into effect.



SECTION III

Checklist for Consulting with Groups within the Community who have Particular Consultation Requirements and Needs



CHECKLIST FOR CONSULTING WITH GROUPS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WHO HAVE PARTICULAR CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS

Older People		
Group (and identified issue areas)	Information Requirement	Consultation Requirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frailty / a number of older people have disabilities • Most older people to varying degrees have failing eyesight • A number are housebound • Older persons often do not like to go out to meetings at night • Often do not drive or else require assisted transport • A high proportion of older people in Maribyrnong are CALD. With Age, they tend to revert to their first language. • A number of older people prefer verbal information as they are not always literate in their own language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written material needs to be in plain, large print (font 14) on sandy coloured paper • Information needs to be short and simple • The use of translation and interpreters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration should be given to utilising support services and direct care workers for assistance e.g. utilising ADASS and Home Care to assist older people to participate in surveys, interviews, group sessions. etc.. • Given that older people often have language difficulties and disabilities it is better to hold group sessions or to use direct one on one assistance from support workers or people from their own ethnic/language group • Often a more structured approach is better. When surveys or interview questions are used they should be simple, short and clear • Adequate time needs to be allowed as communication could take longer • Hearing loops and portable microphones should be available • Assisted Transport has to be provided • Availability of Respite care for carers • Venue should be accessible to people with a disability and preferably be on the ground floor.



People With Disabilities⁴ and Their Carers

Group (and identified issue areas)	Information Requirement	Consultation Requirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of disabilities which require different forms of assistance to enable participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written material needs to be in plain large print (font 14) on sandy colored paper • to be short and simple • Take into account special assistance required for disability i.e. Braille, sign language, audio cassettes, an advocate etc., • Use appropriate symbols in all advertising / promotional material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide aides to enable participation e.g. advocates, attendant carer/ home carer, person to provide sign language etc.. • Communication may take longer • Consider gaining assistance from specialist disability agencies and from workers who work with people with disabilities • Assisted Transport needs to be provided • Venues must have disabled access and disability toilets • Respite Care should be provided to enable carers to attend • Provide resources that enable people with disabilities the opportunity to participate eg. Phone ins, e-mail etc.,

⁴ Further reference should be made to the draft Disability Action Plan, City of Maribyrnong

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities⁵

Group (and identified issue areas)	Information Requirement	Consultation Requirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language- interpreter/ translation needs. Consideration should be given to people not being literate in their own language • Need to be sensitive to particular cultural and religious understandings, requirements/taboo etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreters should always be provided • Translations should be provided • Videos are often a useful medium • Utilise ethnic press, and ethnic radio. Ethnic radio is often a good way of communicating with ethnic people • Utilising key ethnic community people/leaders. • Attending existing ethnic groups / networks, where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreters should always be provided • Consider using ethnic services / key community contact people to provide expert advice; access to the Community and to assist in running the consultation process e.g. the Migrant Resource Centre • Utilising key community contact people may provide a greater insight into the community being consulted and may assist in gaining credibility • Consider holding separate info/consultation sessions with different ethnic groups or at venues where ethnic groups already attend

⁵ For a demographic profile of the City's CALD communities refer to 'Profile of Ethnic Communities, City of Maribyrnong' report based on the 1996 ABS Census data

Young People ⁶		
Group (and identified issue areas)	Information Requirement	Consultation Requirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth will often not attend usual consultation forums or partake in structured consultation approaches • Need to go to where youth hang out • May require transport to attend consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is best provided through venues/spaces where youth hang out or through youth workers or other people that youth trust • Where written material is used should be catchy, bright with popular features such as graffiti art, computer generated animation • Information needs to be short, simple, using language which is catchy • Do not assume that young people will read information /public notices in newspapers • Make up posters/flyers and distribute them through schools, youth services, Centrelink, amusement parlors and railway stations etc.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use less structured consultation approaches e.g. Hang out with youth and ask questions in venues/spaces they frequent • Community art and community development activities are often highly effective • Consider utilising youth workers to assist with the process. Can often assist with accessing or gathering young people for consultation purposes • Schools are often glad to participate and to include such activities within their curriculum • Remember not all youth attend schools • Venues and consultations should be relaxed and informal • Transport will often need to be provided e.g. a bus

⁶ Reference should be also made to the 'Youth Strategy', City of Maribyrnong, 2000



Families, Single Parent Families and Carers with Children

Group (and identified issue areas)	Information Requirement	Consultation Requirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care needs • The time of consultation is important for working parent(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider providing information through schools, maternal child health , child care services, libraries, shopping centres, community health centres, and other community spaces/venues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must provide child care to enable parent(s) /carers to attend • Consultations should be child friendly i.e. provide toys/ child activity space • Children can be incorporated into consultations through community art/library and development activities. Schools, kindergartens/ child care centres may also be utilised; incorporated as part of their activity program • Meetings in general should be at night to enable attendance of working parent(s). Preferably after 7.00 PM when parent(s) have dinner and their childrens' bedtime organised
Other		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport is often an issue for a number of groups • Low income people. Consultations need to be free/cheap to enable attendance. Including refreshments is often good. The cost of transport to attend needs to be considered 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport is good to make available for most consultations. Transport may be required by older people, people with disabilities, youth, families with young children, low income people, and others that have no access to transport. • Consultations should be held with ready access to public transport • Consider providing food and beverages



SECTION IV

A Summary of Community Consultation Processes, Strengths and Weaknesses



A SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESSES, STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Activity	Comments
Information	
User Comments and Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes Phone computer systems like BRS; cards sent to every household and at Council Reception Areas. • Provides a reliable and easy way of Council recording issues and complaints from residents. • Enables formal recording and can be used for both monitoring of performance/responsiveness and for planning purposes
Information meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables discussion and questions to be raised. • Can gain feedback regarding how people are responding to the Information. • Enables addressing immediately any misconceptions and concerns. • Relies on people attending the meeting to receive information
Information Centres or Site Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Centres can provide a range of information. If in an accessible and well used area can serve a useful purpose. • Convenient, but needs to be staffed with someone able to answer questions raised
Hotline/Information Lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used to record and distribute specific info, or for responding to straightforward questions • Useful for providing quick and accurate information around common issues of concern. • Useful for issues of high volume, providing a direct phone line reduces delays eg the Gas Crisis
Public Information/Community Awareness Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a variety of approaches eg. Press, newsletters, radio,TV, displays, presentations and talks to groups, response to queries form the public. • If well organised can reach a wide group of people. Is often the only way some people receive accurate and up to date info. • Needs to cater for people with language ,literacy and disability needs • Can combine Information sessions with consultation. People can then comment on accurate information
Community Liaison Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An officer based at the local level who liaises with residents re local issues, complaints etc. Often combined with being a Customer Service Officer but more proactive.

Consultation	
Public Open meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a forum for information to be exchanged, while being able to gain views. • Convenient and transparent. • Provides potential access for a large number of people to be consulted at the one time. If used carefully, can complement other forms of consultation. • Format often limits the depth of discussion. • A number of people find such public meetings intimidating. • Those attending may not be representative. • Can have low turn out. • People need to be able to get to the meeting
Small Group Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less intimidating and formal than public meetings. As such people feel more able to contribute. • Can have more in depth discussions • Can go to a number of sites making it easier for people to attend. • More likely to get a more representative sample of people
Survey/ Questionnaire (written, phone interviews and face to face)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be well structured to gain useable data • Useful for quantifiable data • Requires skills to compile data from surveys. • Can get to a large number of people. • Phone interviews in particular can pick up people who may not usually input to consultation. • Can also target eg sample across geographical areas. Written questionnaire – there is no incentive for people to fill in surveys. • Can be difficult for people with literacy or language difficulties to complete, • Difficult to use for qualitative info or for in depth information.
Precinct/ Neighbourhood / District Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for planning on a local area basis. • More accessible than a Central Committee or meeting. Demonstrates Council’s Commitment to the local area and to consult.
Call for Submissions/ Written Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables detailed written submissions and responses to documents. • Often a good way of ensuring that everyone feels that they have been able to see and comment on the final document.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables more detailed and in depth responses than other forms of consultation. • It is easier to collate written info. • Responses are recorded in writing. • It restricts responses to those who have the skills or feel confident to write or have the time. • Unlikely to draw responses from minority groups. • Time scales for consulting can be longer. • Analysing responses can be resource intensive
Ballots/ deliberative Polling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful for getting a clear mandate. • Only suitable for issues that you can get a definite outcome. • Fails to provide useful detail on how people view what they are asking to vote on. • Harder to manage the process or the implementation. Provides no qualitative info.. • Easy for people to participate . • Results can be based on simple uninformed responses. • Deliberative polling techniques can be expensive.
Participation	
Community Representation on Council Committees and Advisory Committees to Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input is ongoing – As such enables Community to gain skills in participation, in Council processes and in the specialist area. • Enables Council to get ongoing quality consultation input. • Can become a useful tool for Council in ongoing advise and comment on planning, policy formulation. • Committee can take an ongoing monitoring role. • Provides a tool for Council in quickly gauging Community attitudes to Council positions and to environmental trends.. • A useful way of checking views before going out to a wider audience.. • Such Committees can be seen as providing an independent view from Council. • Demonstrates that Council is committed to genuine consultation as structural mechanism as opposed to a superficial one. • A limit to people able to be on the Committee as such can not represent everyone • Can be dominated by a few individuals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is formal and recognised link to the governance process. • Sometimes this can limit the Group from taking action independently from Council and from being able to express a view that is contrary to Council
Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as not being as formal a Committee Structure. • Are set up around specific action areas and are usually task focused. Time limited and focused on a specific out come. • Attracts people who are interested in the area /action. Also less likely for people to lose interest and commitment. • Easier to wind up when they are no longer serving their purpose. • Not formally linked to Council and as such Council may ignore its outcomes.
Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at a large group of people. • Easy way to gain input of a large number of people into planning and ongoing consultation. • Smaller time commitment for people so more likely to gain commitment. • Less resource intensive. • As Forums occur infrequently it is difficult to gain in depth consultation and ongoing input into planning. • Can be combined with specific working groups around areas of identified interest. • Can gain both broad consultation and ongoing commitment and planning work from those who are interested and committed. • A more targeted approach than ongoing general Committees
Search Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually 20 to 30 people selected to be heterogeneous but sharing identifiable interests, with staged discussion, aimed at identifying a broad cross section of views. • Provides an opportunity for in depth discussion and debate across a cross section of views. • This mechanism works better with well informed and more articulate people. • Focused discussion on one issue can be difficult
Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables participatory input and discussion into formulating views. • Is often a time and cost effective way of consulting. • Can target particular workshops to pick up a range of views

	and to suit a range of audiences
Expert Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually made up of a small group of people. • Provides specialist and skilled advice. • Can provide high quality products as experts already have a background in the area. • Can suffer from lack of local knowledge. Is unlikely to be broadly representative of the Community. • Cannot be a substitute for local consultation. • Is usually combined with other forms of consultation. • Used to move the debate along
User panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small group of users of service. • Allows management /service providers to gain ongoing feedback and input into service provision. • Develops skills and understanding of service issues amongst consumer representatives. • Encourages consumers to have a say on services. Is a useful sounding board for management on issues. • Is seen to be consumer focused and responsive. • Easy and relatively cheap way to gain feedback and to focus on user issues. • Helps to concentrate on issues from a user perspective • Can not be the only form of consultation with users as only represents a few. • To be effective needs good resourcing from management, including the ability to encourage unfettered debate and feedback including views that may be contrary to management.
Citizen Panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Panels are larger than user panels.. • Usually comprise a significant sample of citizens. • Citizen Panels are used as sounding boards or to test specific options and to assess local services, views etc. • Usually committed to activity over time. • Can track changes over time. • As people are recruited on a voluntary basis are more likely to be committed to input. • Special needs of panel members will be known in advance and thus can easily be responded to. • Provides for representativeness of the sample population and for consistency over time.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can ensure that those usually reluctant to be involved in consultation are. • Can be a time consuming process, especially in the setting up stage. Also to be effective requires regular maintenance. • Can be difficult for people to maintain commitment over time
Citizen Juries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convened to gain lay community views on important issues. • Usually 20 people or so who are representative of key sectors of the community. • If selected well and facilitated well can gain very good input in a short period of time. • Enables broad representation. • And quick feedback of an issue in relation to the Community at large
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings together small groups of people to discuss topics on which information is required. • Useful for exploring issues, for gaining in depth feedback. • Are less formal and as such less intimidating. • Are useful for exploring issues before broader consultation takes place. • Useful for topics that are more nebulous and where facilitated discussion may be required. • If used on its own may not be representative of the community
Participatory Projects eg Community arts and community development projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows input from people who are not good at verbal input. Is particularly good for youth and for children and for people with language difficulties. • Provides for visual displays of achievement. • Can lead to the creation of Community Spirit in its own right. • Can lead to more participation because it is seen as being fun. • Hard often to analyse and to gain concrete data. • Is usually used amongst other techniques to ensure all views are gathered
Piloting Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a useful way to test out changes by feedback and observation through practical implementation, before putting them into practice. It enables problems to be sorted out before wide use.

Community Committees of Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables full participation and empowerment.. • Is often seen by Councils as cost effective. • Enables relative autonomy and independence for Committees. • Can operate a service that meets the community's and users views and needs. • Is highly dependent on the Community being skilled • Requires high level management skills. • To be effective requires good resourcing from Council This is often time consuming.. • Requires high level commitment from those on the Committee. • Often Community members do not have the time or the skills. As such can be hard to recruit people. • Presupposes that the Community and Service Users want to manage their own service.
Interactive Internet Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More and more people have access to computers. • Enables people to participate at the will and from a variety of venues. • Youth in particular are use to this approach. • Can allow for ongoing contribution. • Depends on people being computer literate and having access to a computer.

Note any consultative option chosen needs to take into account the needs of groups who are consultation disadvantaged eg. Older frail people' young people, people with disabilities, CALD people.

SECTION V

Worksheet for a Consultation Project Plan



Worksheet for a Consultation Project Plan

For each community engagement project a project plan will need to be developed prior to the commencement of the consultation. The following table is a guide to developing the plan.

1. Aims and Objectives of the Consultation i.e. why do we need to consult, what issues are we consulting on?
2. The Target Group – Who are we consulting? Who are the range of stakeholders?
3. Access Plan – Consultation Plan for meeting the needs of groups identified as having particular consultation requirements.
4. Consultation Methods to be Used i.e. the most effective techniques to meaningfully engage target groups and to gain feedback on issues
5. Timeframe – When will the project be completed?
6. Management of the Project – How will the project be managed? Will there be a project management committee/ project team?
7. Evaluation - Who was consulted, method(s) used, adequacy of time scales, information provided, and costs.
8. Reporting Back - How will the community, participants, council and staff receive feedback on information collected and decision made?
9. Writing outcomes - How will the final outcomes be documented and circulated?

